

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

AND

HIS FIGURES OF SPEECH

BY

J. M. BURTON

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF UNIVERSITY STUDIES OF THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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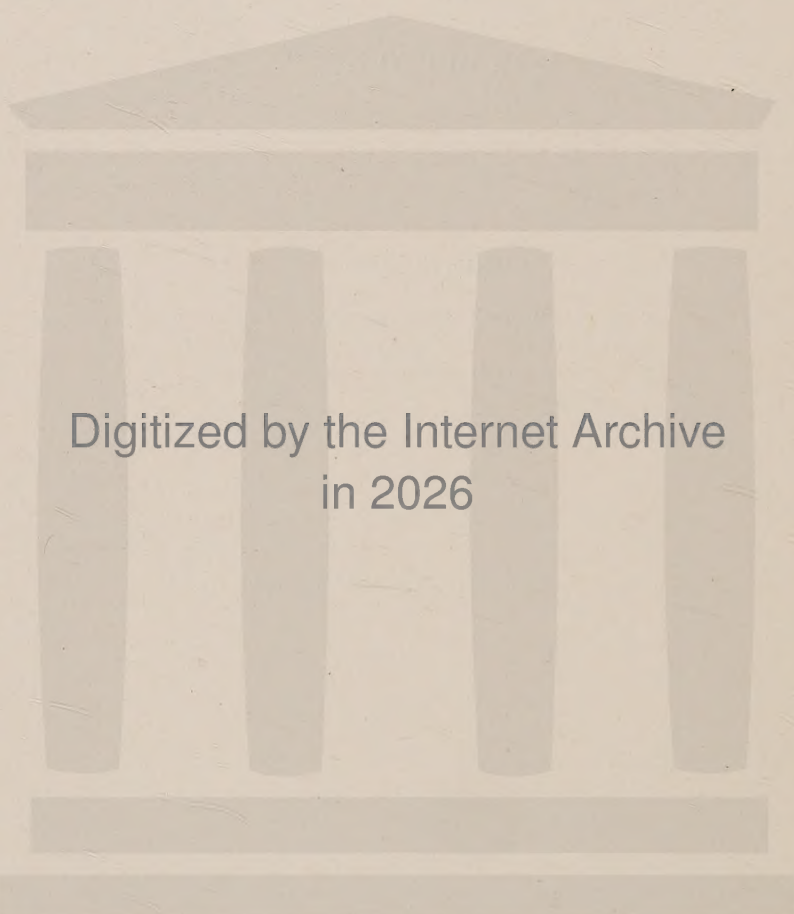
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CHAPTER I

OUTLINE AND STATISTICAL SUMMARY

The aim of this monograph is the study of a group of Honoré de Balzac's figures of speech, in order to fix as definitely as possible their relation to the man, to show how they derive from him and how they throw light on his complex nature, and to estimate their literary value. An investigation of the possible sources of Balzac's figures is not included; such an investigation, while it would have been desirable, is not indispensable to the purpose in view, for which interest is centered, not on the artistic manipulation of the individual figurative conceptions, but on the general lines of the author's choice of the comparisons and on the purposes for which he most frequently uses them.

The figures of speech form an interesting element of any style in which they are employed. Thus there have been numerous studies of their use by ancient and modern authors, but the treatises are frequently little more than catalogues of the figures, arranged according to the fields from which the comparisons are drawn. Such presentations aid us to judge the range of the author's knowledge and interest, the exactness of his observation, the power of his imagination, and his esthetic sense. But, apart from this, the figures of speech, presenting infinite possibilities of arbitrary variation, can be made to throw numerous side-lights on the most intimate phases of an author's personality, and from them we should be able to derive some generalized principles of figurative creation.

If it be true in a certain sense that the style is the man,

the same should be said even more positively of the figures of speech, an element of style in which the author is comparatively free from the restraint of convention and into which the rhythm of his thought is translated freely and often unconsciously. Bourget, in his essay on Stendhal, says: "La première question à se poser sur un auteur est celle-ci: quelles images ressuscitent dans la chambre noire de son cerveau, lorsqu'il ferme les yeux? C'est l'élément premier de son talent. C'est son esprit même. Le reste n'est que de la mise en œuvre¹."

Bourget is not specifically referring to figures of speech, but affirms that the kind of images — physical, intellectual, or emotional — that arise give an accurate index to the character of the mind; a statement which we can accept if we do not attempt too rigid an application. But the way in which these images are associated with one another, the way in which they are paired off, should be still more instructive. We should be able to see what takes place in the author's mind when he wishes to describe a shabby parlor, a miser, a pure woman, or love in a young girl's breast. If there is no association of ideas, we have a literal description or account, but if there is, that association, reflected in the simile or metaphor, represents a definite psychological phenomenon.

With this principle in mind we wish to study the similes and metaphors of Balzac, for whom some such method is natural and even necessary, for his figures have no particular interest in themselves. Victor Hugo is an artist in imagery: we can take pleasure in reading selections from a catalogue of his figures without knowing the context, in the same way that we enjoy a snatch of song from an opera. Balzac's art is not refined to the point of being impersonal, of having a separate, self-sufficing existence; it is indissolubly bound up with the man and his subject. He was guided by a happy instinct when he tried to fuse his work into a single whole, for there are few other cases where the author and his work

1. *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*, I, p. 291.

form such a composite unit, and probably none where a single work loses more of its distinctive character by being isolated. Similarly for the figures of speech, their main interest comes from their relation to the author. In studying the character of the figures, the manner and purpose of their use, we gain an insight into certain phases of the intellect and personality of the man, a process which is readily merged with the reverse; that of indicating how certain ideas, characteristics, infirmities perhaps, of the man are reflected in his figures and hence in his style. This will lead to some more general discussion of certain qualities of style in their relation to the author and in their effect on the reader.

When we recall that we are dealing with the author of the *Comédie humaine*, a limitation of the field is manifestly imposed, and I have selected the *Scènes de la Vie de province*, which include eleven novels, good, bad, and indifferent. They are almost coextensive with the period of Balzac's literary activity, and, what is much more important with an author who shows so little chronological development, they present striking examples of the most important phases of his genius. But for our present purposes we must have a more detailed examination of the figures than it is practicable to give to the whole of even this section; and so attention has been chiefly directed to three novels. The *Lys dans la vallée* gives us an excellent example of the poetic and romantic phase of Balzac and contains such a mass of figures that it is worthy of a separate treatment. *Un ménage de garçon* presents one of his famous monsters of iniquity and is an excellent illustration of the author's materialism, which descends frequently to vulgarity and triviality. Both of these are forceful books and reveal Balzac as a conscious and careful workman. The third novel, *Eugénie Grandet*, is a masterpiece in which the two phases of his work are fused, and for us is all the more interesting because it is here that he has shown the most self-restraint, that he has chastened his genius, and thus we may suppose that what we find in it represents a serious

purpose and is not the result of his having given rein to the fancies of the moment. The conclusions drawn from these three novels will be tested by examples from other novels, more especially from the *Scènes de la Vie de province*.

It has further been necessary to limit the kind of figures studied. As has already been indicated, the term "figure" is used in its most current acceptation, that is as including similes and metaphors, or in other words any expressed or implied comparison between objects or acts which belong to different categories or exist under different circumstances. If an inanimate object or a lower order of life is compared to man, we have a special form : personification. The other rhetorical figures such as apostrophe, interrogation, and even metonymy and synecdoche, are mere modes of expression or linguistic conveniences. Hyperbole and antithesis do express a certain attitude of mind, and we find them frequently employed by Balzac, but the principle back of the creation of the individual figures of either type is always the same, and nothing could be gained by a detailed study : the difference between two hyperboles for instance is merely one of degree.

But figurative expression has become such a vital part of the language that there are many comparisons, usually in the form of metaphors, which have ceased to be felt as such and have become the normal expression of the idea. They are translated directly into abstract concepts without evoking any image of the thing originally suggested as an analogical explanation of the object under discussion. *Jeter un regard, une douleur profonde, l'empreinte de mélancholie sur sa figure, épouser les intérêts de quelqu'un* evoke no image of the literal meanings, and the study of such dead figures belongs to the domain of semantics. It is sufficient to state here that Balzac, exceedingly given to all types of figurative expression, has frequent recourse to these banal figures. He shows an especial fondness for certain terms, such as *jeter, profond, froid*, and terms connected with the ideas suggested by *combat, lien* or *drame*.

It is often difficult to decide whether a given expression represents a personal imprint of the mind of the author or whether he has simply taken it already coined from the wealth of contemporary figurative language. In attempting to determine the extent of the personal element, I have made extensive use of French dictionaries, but have relied especially on the sixth edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, which lies within the dates of the works studied and which gives a considerable number of figurative uses of words. We can at least be sure that an expression from the pen of Balzac, when recognized by this most conservative work, does not indicate any original creation on his part. Other elements must also be taken into account in our decisions. At the base of the figure of speech there is the idea of a comparison between two objects. The comparison may be new or rare, but this is not necessary in order that the figure have a stylistic and psychological significance. The most banal comparison may be revived and made real by a new form of expression. Further — and this is more important for Balzac — a banal figure becomes significant when it is prolonged by carrying out the comparison in detail, or when it is used over and over again. Briefly then, we wish to study those expressions of Balzac in which words are used in other than their usual relations, and in which, either on account of infrequency of the basal idea, or of insistence upon it by a new mode of expression, by prolongation, by frequent repetition, there is evidence that the concept of the thing under discussion does not stand alone in the mind of the author, but that it is associated with something else which he sees and which he wishes us to see on account of certain suggestive similarities. In the elimination of banal figures, the tests may be less rigidly applied to similes than to metaphors, since the naming and the expressed comparison of two objects indicate that both objects were in the mind of the author.

In order to formulate any general conclusions, it has been necessary to make a very careful classification of the figures,

the results of which are shown in the table that follows. The customary method of classifying figures of speech solely by the second term or source of the comparison is inadequate for our purposes, for we fail to grasp the stylistic and psycholog-

STATISTICAL TABLE		Lys dans la vallée	Eugénie Grandet	Un ménage de garçon	Total	
COMPARISONS						
of	to					
(I) man	(A) man.....	124	33	36	193	
	(B) animals.....	46	26	35	107	
	(C) plants.....	33	6	9	48	
	(D) things.....	39	22	20	81	
(II) {	(a) human look	(A) material phenom-	28	11	6	45
	(b) human voice	ena	42	8	10	60
(III) spiritual phenom- ena	(A) plants.....	34	1	5	40	
	(B) fluids.....	53	2	14	69	
	(C) flame.....	42	6	10	58	
	(D) physiological phe- nomena.....	81	4	24	109	
	(E) music.....	9	0	2	11	
	(F) material phenom- ena in general...	103	7	35	145	
(IV) abstract relations and conditions of man	(A) physical relations and conditions..	79	41	17	137	
(V) acts	(A) acts of similar nature.....	19	13	33	65	
(VI) inanimate objects	(A) inanimate objects	41	17	20	78	
	(B) living beings....	31	14	9	54	
TOTAL.....		804	211	285	1300	

ical import of a comparison unless we take into consideration both terms and compare their real relation with that indicated by the figure of speech. I have adopted a grouping which seemed, after a study of the figures in these three novels, to facilitate best a comprehensive idea of the whole mass of

figures, of their individual character, and of the purpose for which they are used. All the figures will be grouped under six general headings corresponding to what Balzac wishes to describe ; opposite each heading are classified as minutely as seemed profitable the second terms of the comparisons.

In the statistical summary given on page 6, I have included only those figures used by Balzac or by his spokesman Félix de Vandenesse ; in this way I eliminate a disturbing element resulting from Balzac's attempt to characterize his men and women by their modes of expression. The figures used in dialogue will come up^a for their share of discussion later on in this study.

CHAPTER II

TOPICAL ANALYSIS OF BALZAC'S FIGURES OF SPEECH

In this chapter the comparisons are grouped according to the nature of their first term, and the chapter will serve largely as an interpretation of the statistical table given at the close of Chapter I.

GROUP I. — FIRST TERM: Man

In this group the figures, as expressed, treat of man as a physical organism, but the intellectual and spiritual sides are naturally present in the mind of the author and in many cases really form the basis of the comparison.

Group I, A. — Comparisons between human beings are very frequent in Balzac; he describes the acts or the emotions of a character by comparing them to the acts or emotions of a person of different social status or under different circumstances. In many cases, of course, the similarity is so great that the comparison could hardly be called a figure of speech, and even those that I have listed, which are usually expressed in the form of similes, might be called with greater exactness analogies, in order to distinguish them from those figures in which there is more real imagery. In the *Lys dans la vallée* we find twenty-seven figures based on differences of age, sex, and physiological condition, among which the most interesting are the seventeen comparisons to children: "Cet homme était devenu inquiet, comme l'enfant qui ne voit plus remuer le pauvre insecte qu'il tourmente" (p. 576); "La comtesse se leva par un mouvement d'impatience, comme un enfant qui veut un jouet" (p. 627); "Avec ce courage d'enfant qui ne doute de rien" (p. 410); "Aussitôt, comme un enfant qui, descendu dans un abîme en jouant, en cueillant des fleurs, voit

avec angoisse qu'il lui sera impossible de remonter, n'aperçoit plus le sol humain qu'à une distance infranchissable, se sent tout seul, à la nuit, et entend les hurlements sauvages, je compris que nous étions séparés par tout un monde " (p. 301). Forty-nine figures are based on social, political, economic, and racial distinctions, the soldier, the sovereign, and the slave offering the most frequent sources of comparison: " Comme l'enfant arraché par Napoléon aux tendres soins du logis, elle eût habitué ses pieds à marcher dans la boue et dans la neige, accoutumé son front aux boulets, toute sa personne à la passive obéissance du soldat " (p. 454); " Arabelle voulut montrer son pouvoir comme un sultan qui, pour prouver son adresse, s'amuse à décoller des innocents " (p. 602); " Un contentement semblable à celui de l'esclave qui trompe son maître " (p. 481).

A very interesting feature of this novel lies in the thirty-seven figures in which religious terms are used with reference to carnal man, especially to express love between the two sexes and its effects. Madame de Mortsauf is a saint, a martyr, a nun: " La sainte qui souffrait son lent martyre à Cloche-gourde " (p. 566); " Sereine sur son bûcher de sainte et de martyre " (p. 461); " Attendant toujours une douleur nouvelle, comme les martyrs attendaient un nouveau coup " (p. 395). There are also specific Biblical references, as: " Couchée comme si elle avait été foudroyée par la voix qui terrassa saint Paul " (p. 585). But much more frequent and striking are the specific comparisons of the sensuous—if not the sensual—to the religious emotions; after catching the tears of Madame de Mortsauf in his hand and drinking them, Félix says to her: " Voici la première, la sainte communion de l'amour. Oui, je viens de participer à vos douleurs, de m'unir à votre âme, comme nous nous unissons au Christ en buvant sa divine substance " (p. 459); or: " Elle qui avait tout laissé pour moi, comme on laisse tout pour Dieu " (p. 574); or: " Elle recevait nos adorations comme un prêtre reçoit l'encens à la messe " (p. 405). In addition to the references to the Bible mentioned

above, there are eleven allusions that may be classed as figures under this heading. They are drawn from Classic, from Italian, and from French sources, with one reference to Don Quixote, and they offer no special interest, with the exception perhaps of the two comparisons of Félix and Madame de Mor-sauf to Petrarch and Laura (pp. 469, 507).

In the other two novels the figures group themselves similarly except that there are almost no references to religion. In *Un ménage de garçon* there are four comparisons to children, and, more striking still, eight to the sick, dying, and dead: "Maigre comme l'est une étique deux heures avant sa mort" (p. 333); "Une femme, verte comme une noyée de deux jours" (p. 333). Fourteen have reference to the professions, with that of the soldier predominating: "Ce sang-froid de général en chef qui permet de conserver l'œil clair et l'intelligence nette au milieu du tourbillon des choses" (p. 130); "M. Hochon...passa l'assiette à travers la table au jeune peintre avec le silence et le sang-froid d'un vieux soldat qui se dit au commencement d'une bataille: "Aujourd'hui, je puis être tué" (p. 223); "Le père Rouget... vint dans la rue prendre Flore par la main, comme un avaro eût fait pour son trésor" (p. 296). There are five allusions of no special interest, with the exception of two referring to recent French history and having a pretentious tone: "Flore tomba sous la domination de cet homme, comme la France était tombée sous celle de Napoléon" (p. 317); "En présence de cette agonie, le neveu restait impassible et froid comme les diplomates, en 1814, pendant les convulsions de la France impériale" (p. 317).

In *Eugénie Grandet* there are six comparisons to children: "J'écou...coute, répondit humblement le bonhomme en prenant la malicieuse contenance d'un enfant qui rit intérieurement de son professeur, tout en paraissant lui prêter la plus grande attention" (p. 303); "Les yeux attachés sur les louis, comme un enfant qui, au moment où il commence à voir, contemple stupidement le même objet; et, comme à un enfant,

il lui échappait un sourire pénible" (p. 368); "A la vue de ses richesses, elle se mit à applaudir en battant des mains, comme un enfant forcé de perdre son trop-plein de joie dans les naïfs mouvements du corps" (p. 321). Eleven figures refer to professions, as the comparisons of the astute Grandet to an astronomer (p. 224) and to an alchemist (p. 262). More interesting here are those that refer to particular situations, and which have usually a pretentious character: "L'attente d'une mort ignominieuse et publique est moins horrible peut-être pour un condamné que ne l'était pour madame Grandet et pour sa fille l'attente des événements qui devaient terminer ce déjeuner de famille" (p. 345); "Certes, la Parisienne qui, pour faciliter la fuite de son amant, soutient de ses faibles bras une échelle de soie, ne montre pas plus de courage que n'en déployait Eugénie en remettant le sucre sur la table" (p. 283); "Mais, à la vérité, la vie des célèbres sœurs hongroises, attachées l'une à l'autre par une erreur de la nature, n'avait pas été plus intime que ne l'était celle d'Eugénie et de sa mère" (p. 277). In addition to the last-quoted figure there are eleven allusions, most of them of a rather pretentious nature. Eugénie is compared to the Venus of Milo, to the Jupiter of Phidias, and three times to the Virgin Mary. Similarly the Cruchots and the Des Grassins are the Medici and the Pazzi of Saumur.

In the comparisons between human beings, then, we find, as we should expect, that the professions play a considerable part. But considering the very small place that the child holds in the *Comédie humaine*, we are a little surprised to note the insistence on child life; the figures indicate that Balzac had observed rather closely the good and bad sides of child nature; and, in addition to the extended figures, there is a still larger number of cases in which *enfantin* or *d'enfant* is used with a psychological connotation. It is interesting to note here that Balzac in his correspondence is continually speaking of his own nature as being that of a child¹.

1. Cf. *Lettres à l'Étrangère*, I, pp. 189, 315, 337, etc.

Group I, B. — In view of Balzac's frequent statement of the correspondence between the human and animal species, we naturally look with interest to see how this idea finds expression in the figures of speech. We find that, though Balzac is fond of animalistic comparisons, he does not let his theory distort his sense of reality. A single animal could not represent a single man, unless its character were greatly enlarged or that of the man simplified ; much less could an animal represent a class or profession in human society. Thus, while one type of animalistic comparisons usually dominates for a character, others are regularly used to represent his various physical or other traits.

In the *Lys dans la vallée* the most striking trait is the frequent comparisons to birds : thirteen, nine having reference to Madame de Mortsau. These comparisons concern her movements : “ Une femme...se posa près de moi par un mouvement d'oiseau qui s'abat sur son nid ” (p. 408) ; more frequently it is her voice : “ La voix de l'ange qui, par intervalles, s'élevait comme un chant de rossignol au moment où la pluie va cesser ” (p. 449) ; or the comparison may be less external, more intellectual¹ : “ Madame de Mortsau était le bengali transporté dans la froide Europe, tristement posé sur son bâton, muet et mourant dans sa cage où le garde un naturaliste ” (p. 556). The other comparisons are rather well distributed over the animal kingdom ; the lion, tiger, wolf, monkey, dog, horse, serpent and insect are each represented by two or more figures, and most of them are applied to several of the characters. Madame de Mortsau has “ cette expression de lionne au désespoir ” (p. 549), while of Lady Dudley it is said that “ semblable à la lionne qui a saisi dans sa gueule et rapporté dans son antre une proie à ronger, elle veillait à ce que rien ne troublât son bonheur, et me gardait comme une conquête insoumise ” (p. 570). The most interesting, and the most

1. I use term “ intellectual figure ” of figures based on an intellectually conceived comparison as contrasted with figures based on purely external and physical similarities. The term is less liable to cause confusion than “ logical. ”

suggestive of character, are those referring to M. de Mortsau, whom Balzac himself came to consider the most striking character of the book ¹: "Je fus une pâture à ce lion sans ongles et sans crinière" (p. 443); "Ses yeux étincelèrent comme ceux des tigres" (p. 445); "Son visage ressemblait vaguement à celui d'un loup blanc qui a du sang au museau" (p. 426; cf. 496); "Ces sortes d'esprits se heurtent volontiers aux endroits où brille la lumière, ils y retournent toujours en bourdonnant sans rien pénétrer, et fatiguent l'âme comme les grosses mouches fatiguent l'oreille en fredonnant le long des vitres" (p. 539); "Le comte avait été, comme les mouches par un jour de grande chaleur, plus piquant, plus acerbé, plus changeant qu'à l'ordinaire" (p. 475).

The animalistic comparisons in *Un ménage de garçon* are well scattered over the animal kingdom, but they have almost always a decidedly pejorative value. The birds are usually birds of prey, but such comparisons are no more uncomplimentary than: "Elle était grasse comme une grive après la vendange" (p. 69); or: "Cet amour maternel... tout aussi nécessaire aux commencements de l'artiste que les soins de la poule à ses petits jusqu'à ce qu'ils aient des plumes" (p. 124). The effect produced seems to be that desired by Balzac. Rouget appears as a butterfly, and twice each as a horse, sheep, and dog, and the impression on us each time is about the same: "Semblable au papillon qui s'est pris les pattes dans la cire fondante d'une bougie, Rouget dissipa rapidement ses dernières forces" (p. 317); in the comparisons to dogs the idea of fidelity which usually dominates with Balzac, gives place to the idea of servility and submissiveness: "Sur le palier Jean-Jacques couché comme un chien" (p. 193); "Il guettait les mouvements de cette créature comme un chien guette les moindres gestes de son maître" (p. 205).

In *Eugénie Grandet* the keynote of Grandet's character seems to be expressed in the double figure: "Financièrement parlant, M. Grandet tenait du tigre et du boa: il savait se

1. *Lettres à l'Étrangère*, I, p. 328.

coucher, se blottir, envisager longtemps sa proie, sauter dessus ; puis il ouvrait la gueule de sa bourse, y engloutissait une charge d'écus, et se couchait tranquillement comme le serpent qui digère, impassible, froid, méthodique " (p. 225). The idea with reference to Grandet expressed in the figure persists throughout the book. The tiger appears in two other similes and to it may be related five metaphors such as : " Le beau marquisat de Froidfond fut alors convoyé vers l'œsophage de M. Grandet " (p. 230). Grandet's cruelty, cunning, and impassiveness, his glance that frightens or chills recall the figure of the serpent or the later one of the basilisk (p. 227). Eugénie is referred to most frequently as a bird with its light-hearted innocence or its sad fate : " Semblable à ces oiseaux victimes du haut prix auquel on les met et qu'ils ignorent " (p. 244). Madame Grandet has " une résignation d'insecte tourmenté par des enfants " (p. 238) ; and the same timid meekness is indicated by four other figures : *biche*, *mouette*, *souris*, and *agneau*. Nanon is compared five times to a faithful affectionate dog. Charles is described in the figures in contrast to the natives of Saumur ; he appears as a giraffe — a curiosity — or " un colimaçon dans une ruche, ou...un paon dans quelque obscure basse-cour de village " (p. 246).

Group I, C. — The comparisons of man to the plant world have not the intellectual significance of the comparisons to animals and they are relatively infrequent in *Un ménage de garçon* and *Eugénie Grandet*, where they are nearly all based on outward appearance, usually color, with the exception of a few poetic figures in the latter novel : " La Descoings avait pris les tons mûrs d'une pomme de reinette à Pâques " (MG., p. 122) ; " Une vague ressemblance avec ces fruits cotonneux qui n'ont plus ni saveur ni suc " (EG., p. 237) ; " Cette physionomie calme, colorée, bordée d'une lueur comme une jolie fleur éclore " (EG., p. 268) ; " Probe autant qu'une fleur née au fond d'une forêt est délicate " (EG., p. 287).

In the *Lys dans la vallée* there are twenty-two comparisons of woman to a flower, eighteen of them referring directly to

Madame de Mortsau. A few refer to external appearance only, as : " La pâleur verdâtre des fleurs du magnolia quand elles s'entr'ouvrent " (p. 624); but they are usually more intellectual, and they present an elaborate development of the idea expressed in the title of the novel; we see the flower under all conditions : " Le lys...broyé dans les rouages d'une machine en acier poli " (p. 471); " Cette fleur, incessamment fermée dans la froide atmosphère de son ménage, s'épanouit à mes regards " (p. 555); " Penchant la tête comme un lys trop chargé de pluie " (p. 573); " Le lys de cette vallée où elle croissait pour le ciel en la remplissant du parfum de ses vertus " (p. 411); " La plupart de mes idées...sont nées là, comme les parfums émanent des fleurs; mais là verdoyait la plante inconnue qui jeta sur mon âme sa féconde poussière " (p. 422); " La renaissance de madame de Mortsau fut naturelle comme les effets du mois de mai sur les prairies, comme ceux du soleil sur les fleurs abattues " (p. 525). The other comparisons are to plants, trees or fruits : " Ce corps aussi délicat que l'est une plante venue en serre malgré les rigueurs d'un climat étranger " (p. 424); " Elle prenait l'attitude d'un saule pleureur " (p. 424); " Elle était mortifiée comme le fruit sur lequel les meurtrissures commencent à paraître et qu'un ver intérieur fait prématurément blondir " (p. 578).

Group I, D. — The comparisons of man to inanimate objects are as a rule commonplace : they are based usually on similarity of color, form, or qualities of resistance, and interest us chiefly as they differ in the three novels, according to the choice of the object to which man is compared. In the *Lys dans la vallée*, the comparisons are naturally used for poetical effect and are frequently stock forms : " La peau était blanche comme une porcelaine éclairée par une lueur " (p. 424); " La raie blanche qui partageait ses cheveux en deux bandeaux semblables aux ailes d'un corbeau " (p. 424); " Après avoir effleuré le frais jasmin de sa peau et bu le lait de cette coupe pleine d'amour " (p. 423). In *Un ménage de garçon* the comparisons are chosen rather with the intention of producing

disgust or else an impression of strength: "Son teint couleur de pain d'épice" (p. 206); "Son crâne couleur beurre frais" (p. 147); "Les paupières étaient comme des pellicules d'œuf" (p. 333); "Un tas de linge et de vieilles robes les unes sur les autres, bordées de boue à cause de la saison, tout cela monté sur de grosses jambes" (p. 331); "Les muscles ne tressaillirent pas plus que s'ils eussent été de bronze" (p. 305). "Blancs et immobiles comme des statues de plâtre" (p. 281) forms a striking contrast with "aux jolies statuette du moyen âge" or "les statues antiques" in the *Lys dans la vallée* (pp. 578, 420), a novel which does not, however, wholly restrict itself to poetic figures, since we find such expressions as: "Ces creux qui font ressembler la nuque de certaines femmes à des troncs d'arbre" (p. 420). In addition to the contrast between the two novels noted, there are other features in the *Lys dans la vallée* that deserve mention: the frequent comparisons to works of art, as illustrated above, and to natural phenomena, such as sky, cloud, etc.: "Ce visage, serein comme un beau ciel après la tempête" (p. 630). In general the comparisons are not confined so strictly to purely physical properties.

Eugénie Grandet stands half-way between these two extremes; we find in it parallels for both types: "Leurs figures, aussi flétries que l'étaient leurs habits râpés, aussi plissées que leurs pantalons" (p. 250); "Sa face trouée comme une écumoire" (p. 241); "Il restait inébranlable, âpre et froid comme une pile de granit" (p. 353); "Ses traits, les contours de sa tête... ressemblaient aux lignes d'horizon si doucement tranchées dans le lointain des lacs tranquilles" (p. 268). Pejorative figures, though not so brutal as in *Un ménage de garçon*, still predominate.

In general we may say that the comparisons to inanimate objects are striking; that they produce the impression which Balzac wished to give. Even the poetic comparisons, while not so original, are often very well chosen.

GROUP II. — FIRST TERM: Human Look or Voice

This group is in the nature of a transition between Group I and Group III. We are dealing with two physical attributes of man — look and speech — but both are considered here according to their moral significance, as expressing the soul of the actor or as affecting those about him.

Group II, A. — In the *Lys dans la vallée* the look is represented twenty times as a light or a flame: “ Je sentais en moi-même ce regard, il m’avait inondé de lumière ” (p. 446) ; “ De ses yeux sortaient deux rayons qui versaient la vie à cette pauvre faible créature ” (p. 438). In three figures the look is, as it were, personified by substituting it for the imagination: “ Mon regard se régalaient en glissant sur la belle parleuse, il pressait sa taille, baisait ses pieds ” (p. 419). The rest are more material expressions.

In *Un ménage de garçon* there are six comparisons to flame, while four give the impression of something hard and metallic: “ Un regard de plomb ” (p. 279), or “ Les teintes froides de l’acier ” (p. 269). The five comparisons to flame in *Eugénie Grandet* do not express the idea so baldly: “ La clarté magique de ses yeux, où scintillaient de jeunes pensées d’amour ” (p. 281).

Group II, B. — Speech is expressed in the *Lys dans la vallée* four times as light and eight times as a fluid: “ Sa voix qui pénétra mon âme et la remplit comme un rayon de soleil remplit et dore le cachot d’un prisonnier ” (p. 416); “ Quand j’eus subi le choc de ce torrent qui charria mille terreurs en mon âme ” (p. 402). Ten figures represent the speech as something that wounds: “ Tous ces mots étaient des coups de poignard froidement donnés aux endroits les plus sensibles ” (p. 580); “ Le dard envenimé de ses paroles ” (p. 617). Other types are represented by the following examples: (music) — “ Un son de voix nouveau, comme si l’instrument eût perdu plusieurs cordes, et que les autres se fussent détendues ” (p. 562);

(sounds in nature) — “ Ce ton doux et bas qui faisait ressembler ses phrases à des flots menus, murmurés par la mer sur un sable fin ” (p. 489) ; (material objects) — “ La plaisanterie française est une dentelle avec laquelle les femmes savent embellir la joie qu'elles donnent ” (p. 602).

Un ménage de garçon contains one comparison to flame, the rest being to something of more solid texture, — cannon-ball, arrow, knife, — together with such expressions as : “ [Elles] avaient accouché de la réponse suivante ” (p. 234). *Eugénie Grandet* contains two comparisons to music ; the rest are materialistic though not brutally so, possessing in fact little originality : “ Le flux de mots où il noyait sa pensée ” (p. 227) ; “ Ces mots retentirent dans le cœur de la pauvre fille et y pesèrent de tout leur poids ” (p. 287).

GROUP III. — FIRST TERM : Spiritual Phenomena

This group has to do with the spiritual phenomena within the man, his emotions, desires, passions, thoughts, *etc.*

Group III, A. — The comparisons to plants form one of the most striking features of the *Lys dans la vallée*. This conception crops out persistently throughout the book, and the following examples will illustrate some of the varied conditions under which Balzac sees the flowers. “ Des tourments subis en silence par les âmes dont les racines tendres encore ne rencontrent que de durs cailloux dans le sol domestique, dont les premières frondaisons sont déchirées par des mains haineuses, dont les fleurs sont atteintes par la gelée au moment où elles s'ouvrent ” (p. 394) ; “ Ma virilité qui poussait tardivement ses rameaux verts ” (p. 404) ; “ Espérances cultivées sans fruit, incessamment replantées et déracinées ” (p. 618) ; “ S'il y avait en son cœur des endroits friables où je pusse attacher quelques rameaux d'affection ” (p. 405) ; “ D'inépuisables exhalations remueront au fond de votre cœur les roses en bouton que la pudeur y écrase ” (p. 480) ; “ Il respira dans cette vallée les enivrantes odeurs d'une espérance fleurie ”

(p. 435); (*in the autumn*) "L'âme rembrunie" (p. 506); "Ainsi, des orages de plus en plus troubles et chargés de graviers déracinaient par leurs vagues âpres les espérances les plus profondément plantées dans son cœur" (p. 564); "L'ouragan de l'infidélité semblable à ces crues de la Loire qui ensablent à jamais une terre, avait passé sur son âme en faisant un désert là où verdoyait d'opulentes prairies" (p. 573). Such comparisons, which differ only in mode of expression from many of those listed under Group I, C, appear only sporadically in the other two novels.

Group III, B. — The comparisons to fluids in the *Lys dans la vallée* may be divided into three general classes, according to whether the conception is that of a fluid within the soul, a fluid in which the soul bathes, or a fluid in the more general sense, including electricity and effluvia. "Les sentiments courent toujours vifs dans ces ruisseaux creusés qui retiennent les eaux, les purifient, rafraîchissent le cœur et fertilisent la vie" (p. 563); "Abîmée en ces rêveries orageuses pendant lesquelles les pensées gonflent le sein, animent le front, viennent par vagues, jaillissent écumeuses" (p. 481); "Mon frère aîné semblait avoir absorbé le peu de maternité qu'elle avait au cœur" (p. 405); "Notre puissance s'échappe tout entière sans aliment, comme le sang par une blessure inconnue. La sensibilité coule à torrents" (p. 443); "Océan d'amour où qui n'a pas nagé ignorera toujours quelque chose de la poésie des sens" (p. 566); "Une de ces douceurs infinies qui sont à l'âme ce qu'est un bain pour le corps fatigué; l'âme est alors rafraîchie sur toutes ses surfaces, caressée dans ses plis les plus profonds" (p. 473); "Des pensées trempées de mélancolie tombèrent sur mon cœur comme une pluie fine et grise embrume un joli pays après quelque beau lever de soleil" (p. 427); "Rassembler dans l'air les effluves de cette âme" (p. 461).

We find the same type of figures in *Eugénie Grandet* in somewhat less pretentious form: "La compassion, excitée par le malheur de celui qu'elle aime, s'épanche dans le corps entier

d'une femme" (p. 276); "Aussi Charles... ne put-il se soustraire à l'influence des sentiments qui se dirigeaient vers lui en l'inondant, pour ainsi dire" (p. 280); "La pauvre fille... s'abandonna délicieusement au courant de l'amour; elle saisissait sa félicité comme un nageur saisit la branche de saule pour se tirer du fleuve et se reposer sur la rive" (p. 329); "L'âme a besoin d'absorber les sentiments d'une autre âme" (p. 371).

Group III, C. — The following examples illustrate the comparisons to flame or light in the *Lys dans la vallée*: "La constante émanation de son âme sur les siens, cette essence nourrissante épandue à flots comme le soleil émet sa lumière" (p. 421); "Elle me retira la lumière qui depuis six ans brillait sur ma vie" (p. 605); "Le désir serpenta dans mes veines comme le signal d'un feu de joie" (p. 476); "En retour de ma chair laissée en lambeaux dans son cœur, elle me versait des lueurs de ce divin amour" (p. 504); "Plusieurs pensées s'élevèrent en moi comme des lueurs" (p. 450).

The figures in the other novels are of a similar nature, all being more or less happy reworkings of the familiar conception of love, hate, pain, knowledge, etc., as light or fire. "Sa figure... parut s'éclairer aux rayons d'une pensée" (MG., p. 190); "Atteinte par un dernier rayon de maternité" (MG., p. 149); "Mille pensées confuses naissaient dans son âme, et y croissaient à mesure que croissaient au dehors les rayons du soleil" (EG., p. 266); "Dans la pure et monotone vie des jeunes filles, il vient une heure délicieuse où le soleil leur épanche ses rayons dans l'âme" (EG., p. 265).

Group III, D. — The physiological expressions in the novels fall into two classes. In the *Lys dans la vallée* forty-seven figures show a confusion between moral and physical conditions of man; the account of the soul-experiences of the two main characters frequently resembles a text-book of physiology: "Une grande quantité de fibres douloureuses qui obligeaient à prendre tant de précautions pour ne le point blesser" (p. 440); "Elle voulait du poivre, du piment pour la pâture du cœur" (p. 566); "Saignant, mais ayant mis un appa-

reil sur ses blessures" (p. 584); "Un cœur ulcéré... les affections entachées d'égoïsme" (p. 533). The conception that is involved in the above figures — that is, of the soul as a living physical organism — is definitely expressed in thirty-six figures; the idea of physical life is impressed the more forcibly in these because the soul is represented as being rather active than passive and appears usually as a man, occasionally as a bird or an animal: "Le corps succombe sous les étreintes de l'âme" (p. 469); "Amour horriblement ingrat, qui rit sur les cadavres de ceux qu'il tue" (p. 568); "Il s'éveillait en moi des idées qui glissaient comme des fantômes" (p. 436); "Que les maladies morales soient des créatures qui ont leurs appétits, leurs instincts, et veulent augmenter l'espace de leur empire comme un propriétaire veut augmenter son domaine" (p. 448); "Un visage où les ailes du plaisir avaient semé leur poussière diaprée" (p. 605); "Elle, si respectée par le plaisir, qui ne l'avait jamais enlacée de ses engourdisants replis" (p. 604).

The same two divisions appear in *Eugénie Grandet*. "Mais, à son insu, l'égoïsme lui avait été inoculé. Les germes de l'économie politique à l'usage du Parisien, latents en son cœur, ne devaient pas tarder à y fleurir" (p. 319); "Peut-être la profonde passion d'Eugénie devrait-elle être analysée dans ses fibrilles les plus délicates; car elle devint, diraient quelques railleurs, une maladie" (p. 295); "Élever à la brochette l'avarice de son héritière" (p. 237); "Elle avait conçu l'amour" (p. 339).

A great many of the figures in Group II contain the same conception as those of this class; if a look or a word acts like a dagger, it must have a physical organism on which to act. But any figure of speech, if carried to its logical conclusion, would necessitate a figurative interpretation of all related phenomena: it must be classified, then, according to the dominant idea. We must decide what phase of the subject the attention of the author was centered upon when he created the figure, and in the above-mentioned figures Balzac is evidently

trying at that particular moment to represent the look and the speech.

Group III, E. — The comparisons to music in *Eugénie Grandet* consist merely in the use of the musical terms *crescendo* (p. 247) and *rinforzando* (p. 261), the effect being rather comical. From the *Lys dans la vallée* the following are typical: "L'interrogation brusque faite à un cœur, un coup donné pour savoir s'il résonne à l'unisson" (p. 450); "Les gradations... de la musique appliquées au concert de nos voluptés" (p. 603).

Group III, F. — In this class are all the concrete expressions of the inner man which do not come under any of the headings above. The source of the comparison ranges from jewels, furniture, and weapons of defence to geometry and natural phenomena.

In the *Lys dans la vallée* we find nineteen figures referring to various kinds of cloth, thirteen to natural phenomena, and there are thirteen which treat of the heart as a place: "La comtesse m'enveloppait dans les nourricières protections, dans les blanches draperies d'un amour tout maternel" (p. 472); "Leur indifférence, engendrée par les déceptions du passé, grossie des épaves limoneuses qu'ils en ramènent" (p. 405); "Elle entra dans les derniers replis de mon cœur, en tâchant d'y appliquer le sien" (p. 504). Other typical examples are: "A l'époque de la vie où, chez les autres hommes, les aspérités se fondent et les angles s'émoussent" (p. 540); "Mon amour, pris dans la religion comme une image d'argent dans du cristal" (p. 465); "L'avenir se meuble d'espérances" (p. 524); "Elle ouvre et ferme son cœur avec la facilité d'une mécanique anglaise" (p. 611).

The figures in the other novels are of a very similar nature: "Afin d'envelopper le cœur de cette pauvre mère dans un linceul brodé d'illusions" (MG., p. 328); "Le grain d'or que sa mère lui avait jeté au cœur, s'était étendu dans la filière parisienne" (EG., p. 318); "Grandet avait observé les variations atmosphériques des créanciers" (EG., p. 336).

GROUP IV. — FIRST TERM : Abstract Relations and Conditions

The figures in this group consist in the representation of a state or act, purely moral or having moral significance, in terms of a corresponding physical circumstance or act. We are still dealing with spiritual phenomena but the point of view is more external. Also the second term of the comparison comes nearer to being purely symbolical, and the figures when developed take on somewhat the appearance of a parable.

Rather than make a separate group, I place here the few figures dealing with pure abstracts. As a rule the abstract quality is expressed in concrete terms only when it is related to a human being, in which case it really represents a moral state.

In the *Lys dans la vallée* about half of the figures are the development of the conception of life as a journey, with the two details of *abîme* and *désert* standing out prominently: "A m'avancer jusqu'au bord des précipices, à sonder le gouffre du mal, à en interroger le fond, en sentir le froid, et me retirer tout ému" (p. 530); "Après être descendue dans l'abîme d'où elle put voir encore le ciel" (p. 435); "Je soupçonnai un malheur, comme lorsqu'en marchant sur les voûtes d'une cave les pieds ont en quelque sorte la conscience de la profondeur" (p. 427); "Cet immense malheur déroulant ses savanes épineuses à chaque difficulté vaincue" (p. 454); "Dans ce grand naufrage, j'apercevais une île où je pouvais aborder" (p. 645); "Voyez par quelles voies nous avons marché l'un vers l'autre; quel aimant nous a dirigés sur l'océan des eaux amères, vers la source d'eau douce, coulant au pied des monts sur un sable pailleté entre deux rives vertes et fleuries" (p. 458); "Cette pensée m'éleva soudain à des hauteurs éthérées. Je me retrouvai dans le ciel de mes anciens songes" (p. 462); "Elle avait habité comme un palais sombre en craignant d'entrer en de somptueux appartements où brillaient des lumières" (p. 525); "Je fouille ce monceau de cendres

et prends plaisir à les étaler devant vous " (p. 647) ; " Les étendards de la mort qui flottaient sur cette créature " (p. 630)

Similarly for *Un ménage de garçon* : " Flore éprouvait la sensation d'une femme tombée au fond d'un précipice, elle ne voyait que ténèbres dans son avenir, et sur ces ténèbres se dessinaient, comme dans un lointain profond, des choses monstrueuses, indistinctement aperçues et qui l'épouvantaient. Elle sentait le froid humide des souterrains " (p. 316) ; " Il... n'userait pas si promptement son capital d'existence " (p. 158) ; " Cette enfant qu'il décrassait " (p. 187) ; " Qu'il jouât, par pitié, la comédie d'une tendresse quelconque " (p. 328) ; " Répugnances pour le vase amer de la science " (p. 187).

The figures in *Eugénie Grandet* present the same types : " La femme... reste face à face avec le chagrin dont rien ne la distrait, elle descend jusqu'au fond de l'abîme qu'il a ouvert, le mesure, et souvent le comble de ses vœux et de ses larmes " (p. 339) ; " A quitter ses tristes pensées, à s'élancer avec elle dans les champs de l'espérance et de l'avenir, où elle aimait à s'engager avec lui " (p. 301).

The figures in this class are the result of a very common process of figurative creation ; the analogies drawn by Balzac between spiritual and physical experiences are such as have in most cases become stereotyped, and it is more difficult to arrive at real originality by reworking the ideas. With Balzac a pretentious expression of these banal conceptions often produces a ludicrous, mock-heroic impression.

GROUP V. — FIRST TERM : Acts

This group includes the comparison between two acts, usually purely physical, but always belonging to the same sphere : that is, physical is compared to physical and intellectual to intellectual. The figures are too diversified to be classified, and their creation indicates no great originality. The professions serve most frequently as source for the comparisons, in particular drama, war, finance, and law.

“ Criminelles selon la jurisprudence des grandes âmes ” (LV., p. 604); “ Crimes de lèse-amour ” (LV., p. 604); “ Mot qui n’était pas encore monnayé ” (LV., p. 426); “ Cette veuve, dont le deuil fut orné de quelques galanteries ” (MG., p. 318); “ Ils semblaient se désigner le dessert comme le champ de bataille ” (MG., p. 194); “ Dans trois jours devait commencer une terrible action, une tragédie bourgeoise sans poison, ni poignard, ni sang répandu; mais, relativement aux acteurs, plus cruelle que tous les drames accomplis dans l’illustre famille des Atrides ” (EG., p. 344); “ Endimanchés jusqu’aux dents ” (EG., p. 301); “ L’assemblée se remua en masse et fit un quart de conversion vers le feu ” (EG., p. 251); “ En tenant jusqu’au dernier soupir les rênes de ses millions ” (EG., p. 360); “ Tous les instruments aratoires dont se sert un jeune oisif pour labourer la vie ” (EG., p. 248); “ La ville entière le mit pour ainsi dire hors la loi, se souvint de ses trahisons, des duretés, et l’excommunia ” (EG., p. 353). We find here also the tendency to render the idea more concrete and definite, either by introducing more of the element of physical force or by substituting a specific act for a habit or plan of action.

GROUP VI. — FIRST TERM: Inanimate Objects

Group VI, A. — In the *Lys dans la vallée* there are fifteen comparisons between objects of a very similar nature: natural objects to natural objects and manufactured objects to manufactured: “ La rivière fut comme un sentier sur lequel nous volions ” (p. 547); “ La pluie incessante du pollen, beau nuage qui papillote dans l’air ” (p. 480); “ Ces résidus de porc sautés dans sa graisse et qui ressemblent à des truffes cuites ” (p. 397). Here I have placed also one comparison between animals: (*the horse*) “ L’hirondelle du désert ” (p. 573). A castle is compared once to a flower (p. 447); the rest of the comparisons are of natural objects to the creations of human

arts — music, poetry, jewelry, cloth, architecture : “ Ce poème de fleurs lumineuses qui bourdonnait incessamment ses mélodies au cœur ” (p. 481) ; “ Les tremblements de la lune dans les pierreries de la rivière ” (p. 444) ; (*effect of light and shadow*) “ Ces jolis jours qui ressemblent à des soieries peintes ” (p. 464) ; “ Une longue allée de forêt semblable à quelque nef de cathédrale, où les arbres sont des piliers, où leurs branches forment les arceaux de la voûte, au bout de laquelle une clairière lointaine aux jours mélangés d'ombres ou nuancés par les teintes rouges du couchant point à travers les feuilles et montre comme les vitraux colorés d'un chœur plein d'oiseaux qui chantent ” (p. 478).

In *Un ménage de garçon* the comparisons are between objects of very similar external appearance for the purpose of more accurate description. The effect is usually pejorative : “ Un chapeau...découpé comme une feuille de chou sur laquelle auraient vécu plusieurs chenilles... Sa méchante veste ressemblait à un morceau de tapisserie ” (p. 184) ; “ Il n'abandonnait son col de satin qu'au moment où il ressemblait à de la bourre ” (p. 119) ; “ [Le bouilli] disséqué par M. Hochon en tranches semblables à des semelles d'escarpins ” (p. 223) ; “ Ruisseaux qui...ressemblent à des rubans d'argent au milieu d'une robe verte ” (p. 182). The figures in *Eugénie Grandet* resemble rather those of *Un ménage de garçon* ; their effect is frequently comical rather than really descriptive : “ Sa vieille montre...qui ressemblait à un vaisseau hollandais ” (p. 246) ; “ Les huit marches...étaient disjointes et ensevelies sous de hautes plantes, comme le tombeau d'un chevalier enterré par sa veuve au temps des croisades ” (p. 266) ; “ Un bûcher où le bois était rangé avec autant d'exactitude que peuvent l'être les livres d'un bibliophile ” (p. 266).

The figures in this group, especially those that have no poetical pretension, are usually well chosen. They give a rather definite picture of the object in question and also suggest the impression that the author wishes us to receive from the

object itself and from the person with whom the object is associated.

Group VI, B. — Under this heading I include all personifications and all animation of inanimate objects.

The *Lys dans la vallée* contains two comparisons of inanimate objects to animals, one personification of a part of the body, two of insects, and five of buildings: "La note unique du rossignol des eaux" (p. 436); "Les moulins... donnaient une voix à cette vallée frémissante" (p. 441). There are fourteen personifications of nature: "Une bruyère fleurie, couverte des diamants de la rosée qui la trempe, et dans laquelle se joue le soleil, immensité parée pour un seul regard qui s'y jette à propos" (p. 478); "Des touffes blanches... vague image des formes souhaitées, roulées comme celles d'une esclave soumise" (p. 480). Seven figures present flowers as representing the thoughts and emotions of man: (*bouquet*) "Ce proluxe torrent d'amour" (p. 480); "Des tiges tourmentées comme les désirs entortillés au fond de l'âme" (p. 480). With a great many of these last twenty-one figures, it is hard to decide whether they belong here or in Groups I and III; for instance, the last seven all have to do with the bouquets by which Félix expresses his love to Madame de Mortsauf, where in the figures of speech he is simply retranslating the flower language into the original. We are in fact dealing with a secret code rather than with figurative creation. Considering the number of comparisons of women and passions to flowers, the reverse process of the personification is, however, very natural. The two concepts have become almost identical and either may be substituted for the other.

The personifications in the other two novels are, as a whole, decidedly commonplace. In *Un ménage de garçon* the effect is usually comical. In *Eugénie Grandet* six personify the house and furniture. "Ce terne allait avoir vingt et un ans, il atteignait à sa majorité" (MG., p. 121); "L'insulte faite à l'opposition constitutionnelle et au libéralisme dans la personne du sacro-saint journal" (MG., p. 168); "En 1806, bien des

paroisses en France étaient encore veuves" (MG., p. 189), "La maison Grandet reprit sa physionomie pour tout le monde" (EG., p. 339); "Les murs épais présentaient leur chemise verte" (EG., p. 266); "Un marteau qui...frappait sur la tête grimaçante d'un maître clou" (EG., p. 231); "Le bruit que chaque feuille produisait dans cette cour sonore en se détachant de son rameau donnait une réponse aux secrètes interrogations de la jeune fille" (EG., p. 267). Real personification, then, plays an almost negligible part in Balzac's profuse description of inanimate objects.

VITA*

Born near Culpeper, Virginia, July 12, 1890, I received my preliminary training from private instruction and at the Randolph-Macon Academy, Bedford, Virginia. In 1906 I entered Randolph-Macon College, whence I was graduated with the degree of bachelor of arts in 1909 and of master of arts in 1910. The next three years I spent as Professor of Modern Languages in Millsaps College. During the summer of 1913 I studied at Columbia University, and in the fall of the same year I entered the Johns Hopkins University, taking French as my chief subject and Spanish and Italian as my subordinate subjects. At present I hold the Fellowship in Romance Languages.

During my residence I have attended the courses of Professors Armstrong, Bloomfield, Brush, Carcassonne, Dargan, Leguy, Lovejoy, Marden, Morize, and Shaw, to all of whom I wish to express my appreciation for their stimulus and guidance. I desire also to offer my thanks to Professor E. P. Dargan for his advice and inspiration in the study of Balzac, and to Professors Armstrong and Carcassonne for their sympathetic suggestions and for their invaluable aid in the preparation of this dissertation.

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MACON, PROTAT FRÈRES, IMPRIMEURS.
